



Ads for a competition promoting Bond Street cigarettes in the West African country of Togo: contestants stood a chance of winning a mobile phone.

main target: according to one report, even the poorest women who eke out a living by selling produce in the markets flocked to buy a pack, in the hope of winning their own mobiles. No doubt Philip Morris, which is spending millions of dollars to persuade the world it has changed its ways, would have answers to the obvious questions the competition raises about the ethics of promoting an addictive, lethal product to people locked in a daily struggle for the barest essentials of life. For increasing numbers of them, cigarettes will turn out to be the barest essentials of an early death.

The Circumlocution Hall of Fame: and the winner is . . .

In March, many of the world's tobacco control organisations received correspondence from a Geneva based organisation named CASIN (Centre for Applied Studies in International Relations). CASIN requested information on organisations' roles in the WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), annual reports and newsletters, explaining it had "taken the initiative of launching a study on the negotiation" of the FCTC. Smelling the deep fragrance of wolf in sheep's clothing, a quick search revealed that CASIN had supplied Philip Morris with information on tobacco meetings in 1993 and 1996, and was listed as an agency serving Philip Morris in 1997.

I wrote to CASIN's Danielle Ecoffey asking, "Your letter to tobacco control NGOs fails to mention your connection with the tobacco industry. This significant omission is plainly deceptive and unethical. Would you care to make any comment on this prior to my journal running an item on your activities in a forthcoming issue [of *Tobacco Control*]?"

Ecoffey replied on 16 April, "I understand well your concerns. They are legitimate" but by the end of a page of soothing words said nothing about who was paying for the research. I immediately wrote back suggesting that a clerical error in her office must surely have resulted in the wrong letter being sent to me, and followed this up with individual emails to the CASIN board of directors, asking the same question.

On 24 April Ecoffey replied with a weasel worded explanation, now short listed for the Hall of Fame of Circumlocution: "The study we plan to launch on the multilateral negotiation of the WHO FCTC is in no way meant for the tobacco industry." "It will be undertaken in total independence and will be public." "The tobacco industry, as you know, has used the Programme's services occasionally", and "Insofar as the work corresponded to the provision of a service, it has been billed . . . In no case has the Programme worked on behalf either of the tobacco industry or of its agents."

So let's get this straight. "In no case" has CASIN worked for the tobacco industry. But CASIN has billed them for the "work" and "service" it has done for them. It is now doing a report on tobacco control NGOs, but this report is not *meant* for the industry. Such lack of ambiguity will I'm sure inspire huge confidence in CASIN's independence.

CASIN's chairman Jean Freymond also replied a month later and was much clearer: ". . .the study was not initiated at the request of, nor intended for the tobacco industry, nor of or for anyone related to the tobacco industry. It is neither financed nor supported in any way by the tobacco industry or by anyone associated with the tobacco industry . . . This . . . is therefore a completely independent study."

This is interesting. Who would be the market for such a study, which would plainly involve considerable costs needing to be recouped? Tobacco NGOs have any number of ways of knowing about each other and are nearly drowning in a sea of emails

about the FCTC process. They are thoroughly networked and nearly all belong to Globalink and the Framework Convention Alliance. Hardly a receptive market for an expensive report about each other's activities. So who, we might wonder, is likely to be the market for CASIN's report?

Freymond provides an oblique hint. "The research studies aim at assisting policy-makers, negotiators, senior public and private managers in search for policy options in relation to the smoother functioning of the international system and international societies. The nature of the issues covered compels the Programme to enter into relation with various actors involved in the issues... In this context . . .the NGO programme and not CASIN as such has had, and has—since the late 1980s—occasional professional contacts with the tobacco industry."

Tobacco Control understands that very few NGOs replied to CASIN's request. Their report promises to be as compelling as *The complete guide to Swiss naval bases*.

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Smoke in the machine: industry's nervous puff over Tobacco Control report

In the June 2001 issue of *Tobacco Control*, Stella Aguinaga Bialous and Derek Yach presented a paper entitled "Whose standard is it, anyway? How the tobacco industry determines the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards for tobacco and tobacco products" (*Tobacco Control* 2001;10:96–104). Using tobacco industry documents, the authors "describe the extent of the tobacco industry involvement in establishing international standards for tobacco and tobacco products and the industry influence on the [ISO]." Evidently, Big Tobacco was not amused.

Offering only "light and mild" praise for the authors, the tobacco industry has lavished king size attention on their paper, with editorial reinforcements recruited from companies spread across four continents. The heightened display of interest is a sure sign that a nerve had been hit by Bialous and Yach, the Executive Director, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health Project Manager at the